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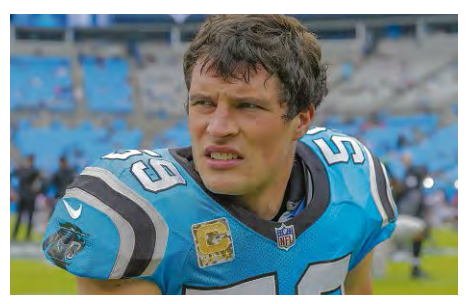

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The Charlotte Observer

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Democrat Lyles makes history in mayoral win

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Democrat Vi Lyles celebrates her mayoral victory over challenger Kenny Smith with her granddaughters Hailey Young, left, and Arya Alexander. "With this opportunity you've given me, you've proven that we are a city of opportunity and inclusiveness," Lyles said.

She will be first African-American woman as mayor

BY JIM MORRILL, KATHERINE PERALTA AND ELY PORTILLO
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Casting herself as a unifier after two years of tumult, Democrat Vi Lyles easily defeated Republican Kenny Smith on Tuesday to become Charlotte's first African-American female mayor.

Lyles took about 59 percent to Smith's 41 percent in unofficial returns. She carried precincts throughout the city, including a handful in south Charlotte.

Despite being heavily outspent, she won on a night Democrats flexed their muscles not only in Charlotte but in Virginia and New Jersey, where they swept state races.

Lyles piled up an 8,400 early-vote margin and built on it throughout Election Day. Her victory came two months after she upset incumbent Jennifer Roberts in the Democratic primary.

"With this opportunity you've given me, you've proven that we are a city of opportunity and inclusiveness," Lyles

SEE MAYOR, 16A

Results

Vi Lyles	58.72%
Kenny Smith	41.18%

187 of 195 precincts reporting

MORE INSIDE
- Charlotte City Council gains newcomers but keeps Democratic majority. 14A
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board to see little change. 14A
- Democrats win governors races in Virginia and New Jersey. 2A
- A transgender candidate beat the sponsor of a "bathroom bill" in Virginia. 2A

SCHOOL BOND REFERENDUM

Voters approve CMS bonds, paving the way for surge of school construction

BY ANN DOSS HELMS
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A record $922 million in bonds for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools was approved Tuesday, clearing the way for a surge of school construction and signaling a vote of confidence in the district.

With early voting and 68 of 195 precincts reporting at 9:15 p.m., the bond referendum had 74 percent approval.

Results

Yes	72.69%
No	27.31%

190 of 195 precincts reporting

"We are heartened by the early support. We are taking it as a vote of confidence that we are trusted to do the right thing with our facilities," said Superintendent Clayton Wilcox, who started the job this summer.

The bond referendum is the largest in Mecklenburg history and the second largest in North Carolina. It will grant county officials permission to borrow money to build 10 schools, replace the buildings of seven existing ones and cover additions and renovations at 12 schools.

Bond votes are also seen as a gauge of community confidence in CMS. The school board recently completed a student assignment revamp and hired Wilcox as superintendent.

Mecklenburg voters tend to support school bonds; the last referendum, for $295 million in 2013, won with 74 percent approval. The last time bonds failed was in 2005, with 57 percent saying no.

This year the Vote Yes campaign, led by a coalition of business and civic leaders, raised more than $370,000, well over the group's initial goal of $300,000. Polls found support for the bonds, but supporters weren't ready to relax Tuesday. In low turnout off-year elections, results are shaped not just by what people think but by

SEE BONDS, 15A

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A sign promotes the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school bonds outside East Stonewall AME Zion Church on Tuesday morning.

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